

Just as no law prevents every crime, no treaty is foolproof. But the Chemical Weapons Convention will help make our citizens more secure. It will also help protect our soldiers by requiring member nations to destroy their chemical weapons, a step that we are already taking under U.S. law.

These overwhelming benefits explain why America's military leaders and Presidents of both

parties have strongly supported the ratification of this treaty. As we remember the terrible toll that sarin gas took in Tokyo 2 years ago, I urge the Senate to help protect our citizens and soldiers and strengthen our fight against terror by ratifying the Chemical Weapons Convention now.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Dinner Hosted by President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland in Helsinki March 20, 1997

Summit With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia

Q. President Clinton, what are the prospects for common ground on this NATO issue?

The President. I'm looking forward to the meeting. I think we'll work something out; I hope we will. We have had 11 meetings. We've worked hard together, and I'm glad to see President Yeltsin looking so fit and well.

Q. How are you doing, President Clinton?
The President. Great.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7:05 p.m. in the Yellow Room at the Presidential Palace. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters on Greeting President Boris Yeltsin of Russia and President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland in Helsinki March 21, 1997

Helsinki Summit

Q. Mr. President, do you expect to be able to find a way to agree to disagree with President Yeltsin on NATO expansion?

President Clinton. I think we'll have a good meeting. And we'll have a press conference this afternoon to answer your questions.

Q. Do you expect any surprises?

President Yeltsin. During the discussions there may be some surprises, but I'm confident that we'll be able to find a way out, a solution out of these surprises. We have a good will to try to accommodate each other and remove all the disagreements that we still have today. And we grow convinced that our most ardent desire—and then we know that skeptics in the past

have always proved that wrong, saying that it's not possible to reach agreement on an issue; in the final analysis we did come to agreement on most thorny issues. And the two Presidents, heads of the two great powers, are duty bound to act in this way. And I think Bill would agree with me that each of us will be prepared to cover his own part of the way.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:38 a.m. at Mantyniemi, the residence of President Ahtisaari. President Yeltsin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia in Helsinki

March 21, 1997

Russia and NATO

Q. President Yeltsin, do you consider NATO a threat to Russia, or are you convinced otherwise by now?

President Yeltsin. Well, I'm not convinced otherwise.

President Clinton. We'll have a press conference later, guys.

Q. You guys always give us a surprise when you meet, Mr. President. Do you expect any surprises today?

President Yeltsin. Perhaps through the course of the discussions we may have some surprises. We won't have any surprises at the end of the discussions.

NOTE: The exchange began at 9:43 a.m. at Mantyniemi, the residence of President Martti Ahtisaari of Finland. President Yeltsin spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With President Boris Yeltsin of Russia in Helsinki

March 21, 1997

President Clinton. Please sit down, everyone. Don't make me all alone. [*Laughter*] Let me say that President Yeltsin and I will have opening statements, and then we'll begin alternating questions, first with a question from the Russian press and then the American press and then back and forth.

I would like to begin by thanking President Ahtisaari, Prime Minister Lipponen, all the people of Finland for their very gracious hospitality to President Yeltsin and to me and for the extremely constructive role that Finland plays in a new era for Europe.

This is my first meeting with President Yeltsin in each of our second terms, our 11th meeting overall. At each meeting we have strengthened our nations' relationship and laid a firmer foundation for peace and security, freedom and prosperity in the 21st century.

Here in Helsinki we have addressed three fundamental challenges: first, building an undivided, democratic, and peaceful Europe for the first time in history; second, continuing to lead the world away from the nuclear threat; and third, forging new ties of trade and investment that will help Russia to complete its remarkable transformation to a market economy and will bring greater prosperity to both our peoples.

A Europe undivided and democratic must be a secure Europe. NATO is the bedrock of Europe's security and the tie that binds the United States to that security. That is why the United States has led the way in adapting NATO to new missions, in opening its doors to new members, in strengthening its ties to nonmembers through the Partnership For Peace, in seeking to forge a strong, practical partnership between NATO and Russia. We are building a new NATO, just as the Russian people are building a new Russia. I am determined that Russia will become a respected partner with NATO in making the future for all of Europe peaceful and secure.

I reaffirmed that NATO enlargement in the Madrid summit will proceed, and President Yeltsin made it clear that he thinks it's a mistake. But we also have an important and, I believe, overriding agreement: We agreed that the relationship between the United States and Russia and the benefits of cooperation between NATO and Russia are too important to be jeopardized.

We didn't come here expecting to change each other's mind about our disagreement, but we both did come here hoping to find a way of shifting the accent from our disagreement